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SUBJECT: HOUSE DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE COMMISSION VISITS  
JAKARTA

REF: JAKARTA 01092 AND PREVIOUS

11. (U) SUMMARY: Congressman David Price led the House Democracy Assistance Commission's (HDAC) fourth visit to Jakarta from June 30-July 2. The 23 person delegation included five other members, spouses and staff. While in Jakarta, HDAC held meetings on parliamentary reform, foreign policy, and defense. They also trained Indonesian Parliament (DPR) staff and members and met newly elected DPR Members. END SUMMARY.

HDAC PRICE CODEL VISITS JAKARTA

12. (U) HDAC is a bi-partisan commission of 20 members formed in 2005 to promote global democracy. It now supports parliamentary reform and capacity building in 14 (originally 5) newly democratic countries. The six members on this visit included: David Price (D-N.C.); Vern Buchanan (R-Fla.); Jim McDermott (D-Wash.); Jim Cooper (D-Tenn.); Bob Etheridge (D-N.C.); and Phil Gingrey (R-Ga.). The Members' program addressed parliamentary reform, foreign policy, and defense. Staff training focused on research, staff development, legislative drafting, and constituent services.

MEETING WITH THE SPEAKER

13. (U) Speaker Laksono declared that this is a perfect time, with President Obama in office, to strengthen U.S.-Indonesian ties. He expressed his appreciation for HDAC's return visits. Another Indonesian member of Parliament thanked the U.S. for our assistance in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami.

14. (U) U.S. attention to Papuan issues was also at the top of the agenda. Laksono criticized language on Papua that was recently proposed in Congressional legislation which he felt impinged on Indonesia's sovereignty. He thanked Congress for removing the language. Representative Price acknowledged Indonesia's sovereignty, and added that its democratic development enabled it to address challenges in Aceh and to make changes in the military that could help Indonesia more effectively govern Papua.

15. (U) Both sides supported strengthening Indonesia's democratic institutions. Laksono discussed priorities in the final months of this parliament's term. These include: pending legislation on the structure and role of legislative bodies and the State Secrets bill, as well as finalization of the State budget, potential accession to the International Criminal Court, and completing an investigation into possible irregularities which may have occurred during the April legislative elections.

## PARLIAMENTARY REFORM

¶6. (U) HDAC has been intensely engaged in parliamentary reform efforts in the DPR since 2006. A group of parliamentarians from various reform committees briefed HDAC on the progress to date and ongoing efforts. In particular, the group focused on the bill on the structure and role of legislative bodies, which is at a crucial point in deliberations and is anticipated to pass shortly. If passed, the bill would strengthen the role of the DPR (vis a vis the Executive Branch) and give members oversight over their own budget and staff. (Note: Currently the Executive Branch, through the office of the Secretary General, controls the parliamentary budget.) Another goal is to allow for Parliament to participate in the selection of the Secretary General, currently an appointed position.

¶7. (U) The parliamentarians also hope to improve the ethics and participation of members. They would like more public access to information. They stated that increased resources aimed at improving member-constituent interaction and accountability are also essential. They suggested that establishing local offices for members to directly interact with their constituents would be one way to increase member responsiveness. They noted that there may be a move toward a district system such as in the U.S. which would strengthen the new focus on member-constituent relationships.

## MEETING NEW MPS

¶8. (U) The Ambassador hosted a coffee which offered the delegation an opportunity to engage with newly elected

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members of Parliament who have not yet taken their seats. Ambassador Hume, Representative Price, Representative McDermott, and senior reformist parliamentarian Marzuki Darusman gave remarks on their hopes for continued U.S. Indonesian cooperation and the wish to engage the new DPR in reform efforts. With over 60% turnover in Parliament, there is a sense of change and an opportunity for the Mission to engage these new MPs to advance U.S. priorities.

## DEFENSE/FOREIGN POLICY

¶9. (U) The delegation also held discussions regarding defense and foreign policy. On July 1, the Members of Congress met with Minister Juwono Sudarsono at the Defense Ministry. Representatives of the Indonesian military services joined Sudarsono for the discussion. Representative Price noted the purpose of the delegation's visit, highlighting the importance of building links between legislatures, assisting partners in improving governance capabilities, and helping upgrade relations between the U.S. and other countries. Sudarsono welcomed such interaction, commenting that the Indonesian military deeply appreciated training opportunities provided by the U.S. These opportunities had helped the military become a more modern, reform-minded force. Sudarsono added that Indonesia considered the U.S. role in Asia and the Pacific to be crucial to peace. The U.S. played a "balancing role" which continued to be vital in Northeast and Southeast Asia.

¶10. (U) Sudarsono added that the Indonesian military continued to transform itself into a more professional force. In the 1950s and stretching into the 1990s, the military had been highly engaged in governing the country as a form of "guided democracy." With the advent of democracy in 1998, the military was now working under civilian management and trying to divest itself of businesses and other outside investments. It still had many steps to take, but much progress had been made. That said, because Indonesia was a poor country, the military--under the direction of the government--would remain engaged in trying to assist in building national infrastructure, including health facilities and schools. A high priority was also given to

disaster response given that much of the country straddled "the ring of fire."

¶11. (U) In a separate meeting with parliamentarians, Representative Price noted Indonesia's military reform efforts and said that the U.S. Congress was committed to supporting the United States' military relationship with Indonesia. He underscored the importance of legislative oversight of defense matters and sought Indonesian views on the subject. Foreign affairs and Defense Committee Vice-Chairman Yusron Ihza said the DPR was committed to oversight of Indonesian defense and foreign policy. This function, he said, was critical to safeguarding Indonesia's democracy. Several parliamentarians hailed the lifting of Congressional restrictions on assistance to the Indonesian military and said that U.S. support was critical to building a professional and accountable military.

¶12. (U) Several parliamentarians explained that the DPR was pressing the GOI to make democracy and human rights a more central part of its foreign policy. Many members entered politics after having been pro-democracy activists during Indonesia's authoritarian past. Promoting democracy remained important to them. Djoko Susilo said that Burma was a matter of the highest concern. DPR members would continue to press the GOI to take a tougher line pressing the Burmese regime to reform. Representative Price noted that smart power strategies like the HDAC were an effective way to promote democracy and encouraged the DPR to explore similar initiatives.

#### HEALTH ISSUES

¶13. (U) Representative McDermott expressed interest in how the Congress could help advance health cooperation. Mission provided a one page fact sheet, sent also to EAP/MTS. Mission also briefed the doctor accompanying the delegation.

#### HDAC INVOLVEMENT REAPS DIVIDENDS

¶14. (U) HDAC's continued engagement with the Indonesian Parliament over the past four years has encouraged Indonesian democratic initiatives. Results of HDAC's efforts include the structural reform legislation currently under review.

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More importantly, Indonesian parliamentarians have gone from asking why reforms are needed to asking how to enact them. The Indonesian commitment to parliamentary reform was evident in the strong turnout for all events and keen engagement in staff training. Continuing to engage with the many new parliamentarians will be key in facilitating further democratic reform.

¶15. (U) This message was approved by CODEL Price.  
HUME